

ES/MI # 357

29 August 1983

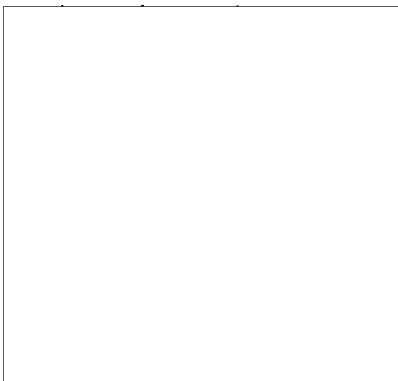
MEMORANDUM FOR: See Distribution

SUBJECT : Meetings

Type of Meeting : SSG
Date : Monday, 29 August
Time : 2:30 p.m.
Place : Situation Room
Chaired By : Vice President
Principal Only? : Plus one
Subject/Agenda : Lebanon

When to Expect Papers : None
Time Info Received : Per Elise, NSC, 10:25 a.m.

Distribution:



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TALKING POINTS

Syrian and Soviet Options in Lebanon

Syria can derive considerable satisfaction from the flow of events in Lebanon which strengthen Assad's conviction that things are going his way. Syria will therefore sit tight and watch events unfold, ensuring that its key constituents continue to receive support. Syria will:

- Encourage Jumblatt to stand firm on Druze terms for any national reconciliation and to oppose LAF deployment by force into the Shuf.
- Ensure the Druze are receiving necessary arms to maintain their resistance to any outside imposed force. The Israelis are turning a blind eye to any arms resupplies to the Druze; Israel wants to ensure Druze goodwill in keeping out PLO and Syrian infiltration to the south in the future.
- Strengthen the resolve of the anti-Gemayel National Salvation Front (Franjiyah, Karami, Jumblatt) to stand firm in rejecting the Israeli-Lebanese accords.

Syria can use its own artillery to periodically shell any part of the Beirut area to keep tensions high. It will avoid direct military involvement, however, leaving the fighting to Syria's Lebanese supporters. Syria will take efforts to avoid sparking Israeli attacks against itself, especially while the pace of events is moving strongly against national reconciliation and in favor of confessionalism and partition. Syria can live happily with partition, confident that it remains the dominant power in Lebanese politics.

The USSR's interests are closely linked to Syria's. The Soviets support Syrian opposition to any US-sponsored peace plan in the area, but will see no need for specific involvement in events. The Soviets will probable limit themselves to:

- Continued propaganda support against US diplomatic initiatives;
- Periodic contact with dissident groups within Lebanon to encourage their rejection of the Lebanese-Israeli accords;
- Opposition to any increased US military role in Lebanon.

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Graham E. Fuller
NIO/NESA
29 August 1983TALKING POINTS

A Strategic Overview of the Situation in Lebanon

All the indicators -- recent and earlier -- show a clear and strong trend by each confessional group to dismiss national reconciliation as unrealistic and to prepare itself for future armed clashes.

Gemayel has not shown the will or the strength to impose the central government's will upon the various confessional groups, and is caught between uncompromising forces, including his own father.

Israel clearly has decided that partition is in the cards and is arranging separate deals with each faction it can throughout the country. It views Gemayel as all but irrelevant. Israel will not accept further casualties by a prolonged stay in the Shuf in what they consider is an unsalvageable situation there.

Syria also sees partition in its own best interests and has enough assets to ensure that any reconciliation -- except under its own terms -- does not come about.

The MNF, however deployed or augmented, cannot play a decisive role in turning the situation around for Gemayel; the antagonisms are too deep and are moving away from reconciliation.

If the LAF is used to impose the Gemayel government upon the confessional areas it will spark close cooperation among all confessional groups opposed to the government, leading to closer Druze-Shia-Muslim cooperation, aided by anti-Gemayel Christians in the north. The Army was never intended to be used to impose the central government's rule absent political agreements among the Lebanese factions. If it is used in this manner, the LAF might well splinter along confessional lines, leaving the central government with a rump Christian force at best. Gemayel will probably be assassinated.

Close US involvement in assisting the LAF to impose itself will mark the US as hostile to the interests of most confessional groups and will greatly raise the security threats to the US presence in Lebanon. (US involvement with the LAF in seeking negotiated extension of its authority does not mark the US as a threat to confessional forces.)

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